

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05

/060 W

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R 071320Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8499

C O N F I D E N T I A L BRASILIA 2547

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, BR

SUBJECT: STATEMENTS BY KEY FIGURES ON MILITARY, 1964 REVOLUUTION

REF: BRASILIA 2322

SUMMARY: VARIOUS RECENT STATEMENTS BY KEY FIGURES ON THE MILITARY AND THE 1964 REVOLUTION AROUSED SOME COMMENT HERE AS TALK OF HARDLINE MILITARY RESISTANCE TO DECOMPRESSION (SEE REFTEL) BECAME INCREASINGLY COMMON AND PUBLIC: IN OUR VIEW, HOWEVER, THE STATEMENTS REPRESENTED NO CHANGE OR GIVING OF GROUND BY ANYONE, AND OFFERED ONLY SCANT MATERIAL FOR ANALYSIS. END SUMMARY.

1. ARENA-ORGANIZED COMMEMORATION MARCH 31 OF 1964 REVOLUTION WAS OCCASION FORMOST OF THE STATEMENTS. PRESIDENT GEISEL, WHO NOTED HE ATTENDING CEREMONY AS "HONORARY PRESIDENT OF OUR PARTY" AND SAID HE WAS SPEAKING EXTEMPORANEOUSLY, NEVERTHELESS MUST HAVE GIVEN SOME PREVIOUS THOUGHT TO HIS DECLARATION THAT "I WAS AND CONTINUE TO BE ONE OF THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS REVOLUTION": THE REMARK IS CORRECTLY SEEN AS BOTHA MESSAGE TO THE MILITARY THAT HE REMAINS AWARE OF HOW HE BECAME PRESIDENT, AND AS AN AFFIRMATION THAT HE WILL DEFER TO NO ONE REGARDING INTERPRETATION OF THEREVOLUTION. HIS STATEMENT THAT THE REVOLUTION WILL CONTINUE ALONG THE SAME PATH IS, IN HE CONTEXT OF THE ISSUE OF DECOMPRESSION, ESSENTIALLY NEUTRAL.

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2. SPEAKING THE SAME DAY, ARMY MINISTER FROTA RECALLED THE CORRUPTION

AND CHAOS WHICH GAVE RISE TO THE REVOLUTION, AND WARNED THAT ENEMIES ARE STILL ACTIVE. CALLING MOMENT ONE FOR "UNDERSTANDING AND WORK", HE EXPLAINED THAT THE FORMER WAS "TO SEPARATE OURSELVES FROM PRECONCEPTIONS AND TO AVOID PREJUDGMENTS": THE LATTER WAS "SO THAT WE CAN COMPLETE THE REVOLUTIONARY WORK AND CONSOLIDATE, IN OUR COUNTRY, THE TRUE DEMOCRACY, IMPLANTED BY THE 1964 REVOLUTION, WITHOUT IMITATING FAILED ALIEN FORMS AND FREE OF THE DELETERIOUS INFLUENCE OF COMMUNISM". HE CONCLUDED, "I AM CERTAIN THAT, TOGETHER, WE WILL ATTAIN THIS OBJECTIVE". NAVY MINISTER HENNING, IN STATEMENT THAT EMPHASIZED PROFESSIONALISM, TRAINING AND EDUCATION, ALSO NOTED EXISTENCE OF MALCONTENTS WHO ARE "IDEOLOGICALLY CONTAMINATED" AND OFTEN "TRAINED OR BANKROLLED BY FOREIGNERS", AND DECLARED CRYPTICALLY THAT "FAITHFUL TO THEIR CONSTITUTIONAL ROLE, THE ARMED FORCES BACK THE CONTINUITY OF THE PROGRESS OF BRAZIL". AIR MINISTER ARARIPE CALLED HIS MINISTRY "AWARE OF AND PARTICIPATING IN THE EFFORT UNDERTAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT TO BREAK THE BARRIER WHICH SEPARATES US FROM THE DEVELOPED PEOPLES AND TO STRUCTURE THE JUST AND HUMANE SOCIETY TO WHICH ALL BRAZILIANS ASPIRE. BUT FOR THIS, THE REVOLUTION CANNOT DOZE ON ITS VICTORY LAURELS . . ." SOME OBSERVERS NOTED THAT WHILE LATTER TWO MINISTERS' STATEMENTS INCLUDED RESPECTFUL REFERENCE TO GEISEL, FROTA'S DID NOT MENTION HIM.

3. IN VARIOUS IMPROMPTU REMARKS MADE SAME DAY, II ARMY COMMANDER GENERAL D'AVILA MELLO ALSO WARNED OF CONTINUING THREATS TO BRAZIL'S PEACE AND PROGRESS AND COMPLAINED OF EFFORTS TO DAMAGE IMAGE OF SECURITY FORCES. GREATEST ATTENTION, HOWEVER, WAS GIVEN HIS DECLARATION THAT "THE BRAZILIAN ARMY IS ONE ONLY, WHERE THERE EXISTS NEITHER A HARD GROUP NOR A SOFT GROUP. IT IS A COHESIVE UNITY UNDER THE ORDERS OF GENERAL GEISEL". LATER SAME DAY HE SAID, "THE ARMY IS ABSOLUTELY UNITED AROUND ITS LEADERS, OUR MINISTER, AND OUR PRESIDENT". (HE ECHOED LATTER THOUGHT WHEN FROTA ARRIVED IN SAO PAULO FOLLOWING DAY, TELLING HIM HE FOUND THE II ARMY "COHESIVE AND WEDDED TO THE ORDERS OF YOUR EXCELLENCY AND THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC".) WHILE IT MAY BE, AS SOME HAVE CONTENDED, THAT THESE REMARKS HAVE A PARTICULAR SIGNIFICANCE IN THE CONTEXT OF FROTA'S VISIT TO SAO PAULO FOLLOWING HIS VISIT TO RIO GRANDE DO SUL (SEE REFTEL), IT IS ALSO TRUE THAT THEY DO NOT DEPART FROM ESTABLISHED NORMS. SIMILARLY, III ARMY COMMANDER GENERAL OSCAR LUIS' IDENTIFICATION MARCH 31 OF FIVE "PERMANENT NATIONAL OBJECTIVES"--

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TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY, NATIONAL UNITY, NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY, SOCIAL PEACE, AND REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY--SOUNDED POSITIVE TO SOME BUT IN FACT HAVE NO OPERATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE IN THE BRAZILIAN POLITICAL CONTEXT.

4. THE REMARKS NEVERTHELESS GAVE RISE TO GENERAL COMMENT TO THE EFFECT THAT THEY SIGNALLED MILITARY ADHERENCE TO GEISEL AND HIS PROGRAM OF DECOMPRESSION. A COLUMN BY O ESTADO DE SAO PAULO'S

WELL-INFORMED BRASILIA BUREAU CHIEF APRIL 1 WAS HEADLINED,
"SILVIO FROTA'S TALK TRANQUILIZES CONGRESS" AND DECLARED THAT
HIS STATEMENTS WERE ENOUGH TO OVERCOME, AT LEAST TEMPORARILY,
THE CLIMATE OF TENSION IN POLITICAL CIRCLES.

COMMENT: IN OUR VIEW, IF THERE IS ANY REASSURANCE TO BE DRAWN
FROM THESE REMARKS, IT WOULD HAVE TO BE BASED NOT ON ANYTHING
UNUSUAL ABOUT THEM, BUT RATHER ON THEIR QUITE ORDINARY NATURE.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MILITARY PERSONNEL, SPEECHES, PARTY LEADERS, POLITICAL SITUATION, COMMEMORATIVE CELEBRATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 07 APR 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975BRASIL02547
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750120-0508
From: BRASILIA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750477/aaaacrxd.tel
Line Count: 124
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 BRASILIA 2322
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 04 SEP 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <04 SEP 2003 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <02 DEC 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: STATEMENTS BY KEY FIGURES ON MILITARY, 1964 REVOLUUTION
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, BR
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006